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The Motif of Power in Matthew's Gospel

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Abstract

An exegetical approach to Matthew's Gospel, comparing and contrasting the third temptation of Christ (Matthew 4: 8-11) and the final scene in Matthew 28:16-20. The third temptation is that of empire. This motif has historically shaped Western Protestant missions since William Carey's 1792 Enquiry. However, a closer reading of the Mt. 28 text, set against the example of Jesus himself, suggests that Christian witness must always be subversive of empire: Jesus, according to Matthew, redefines power in terms of vulnerability and sacrifice.

This leads to three categories of questions: Firstly, an exploration of the appropriateness of the language used in 'mission' including questioning the use of the word itself (and its derivatives, such as 'missional'). Secondly, it leads to a critique of the power structures that persist to exist in the 'missionary enterprise.' Thirdly, it requires active listening of the unheard voices on the margins.

This paper would be suitable for BISAM and/or Theology of Mission. Its originality lies in it being part of an ongoing research project of mine, *Evangelism Through the Eyes of Jesus*, which is seeking to explore the theology of evangelism through a study of the Synoptic Gospels. I will submit the paper for *Mission Studies*. An additional feature of originality is the combination of the exegetical method through a post-colonial lens, shaped in part through dialogue with refugees in Europe.